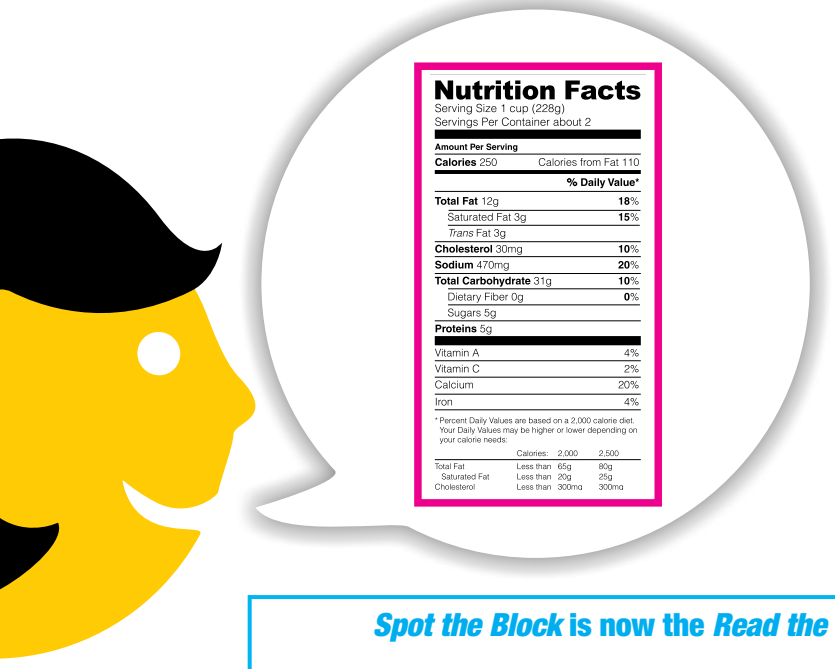
Nutrition Facts

Read the Label

Equipping Parents to Talk to Kids about the Nutrition Facts Label

A Planning & Presentation Manual for Community Educators



Welcome to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's **Read the Label** Youth Outreach Campaign!

The **Nutrition Facts Label** gives the information needed to make healthful food choices. This manual is designed to help you spread the word to families in your community … and get them excited about "getting their food facts first"!

Spot the Block is now the *Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign*!

Launched in 2007, the ***Spot the Block*** **Tween Campaign** from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has evolved into a nationwide grassroots initiative. Through this hands-on program, kids, families and community outreach leaders unite with the goal of using the **Nutrition Fact Label** as their everyday tool for making smart and healthful food choices.

The ***Read the Label Youth*** **Outreach Campaign** includes fun, easy tips and targeted education to help make label reading a key component through which today's young people are equipped to achieve Healthy Childhood Weight.

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What is
Read the Label?

Read the Label is a public education campaign designed to help kids (ages 9 - 13) understand the Nutrition Facts Label on food and beverage packages … and then use that information to make healthful dietary choices.

- Young people are in a transition phase, taking increased care of themselves and making many of their own food choices. Helping them to **establish good habits** as they are learning to make these decisions can have tremendous long-term impact!
- Read the Label also encourages parents to **support their kids'** efforts to use the **Nutrition Facts Label** when making food choices.

Your Role:
Working with Parents

Read the Label reaches out to parents as key partners in their children's healthy eating. The program helps **parents** help their kids to learn to make wise nutrition choices.

This is especially important for kids in the "tween" years (age 9 – 13) as they begin making more and more food decisions for themselves … because as you know, parents are **influential role models** for their children, and are in a key position to engage their children in a conversation about healthy eating. As an educator, **you** can foster this conversation!

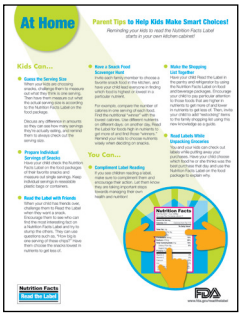
This **Manual** will help prepare you for meeting with parents in your community, and getting them on board with the Read the Label program. Using it will help *you* help *families* embrace the **Nutrition Facts Label** as a handy tool they can use every day.

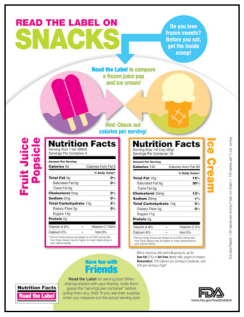
National Campaign Elements

Together, parents and their children can **Read the Label** to make informed ***decisions*** about food choices based upon nutrition ***facts***.

For Kids and Parents
Online materials at **fda.gov/nutritioneducation** include:

- Printable Family Activities, with hands-on tips for parents and kids
- Background information and handouts/resource materials
- Presentation information, including this Manual and a customizable PowerPoint® presentation with talking points





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Planning a Read the Label Presentation

One of the best aspects of this Read the Label presentation plan is its **flexibility** – in timing, audience structure, and activities. Consider these presentation elements and options, and choose the approach that works best in your own community setting.

Timing

The recommended structure for teaching parents about this important health topic is:

- **A two-session presentation** for each community group, conducted during two 30-45 minute sessions.
- **15 to 20 parent participants**, all attending both sessions.

Alternate timing: If preferred, the presentation may also be executed in one session.

Audiences

While this Manual is offered as a tool or teaching parents, it could also be used with young audiences as needed. With a few modifications in wording, you can easily introduce and execute the activities with **kids/youth groups**.

Activities

The family activities shown on Pages 8-15 are flexible. If it is not feasible for families to conduct these exercises at home, you can do the activities on-site using purchased food and beverage products, and/or by taking the group on a trip to a supermarket.

The Presentation Plan begins on Page 6!

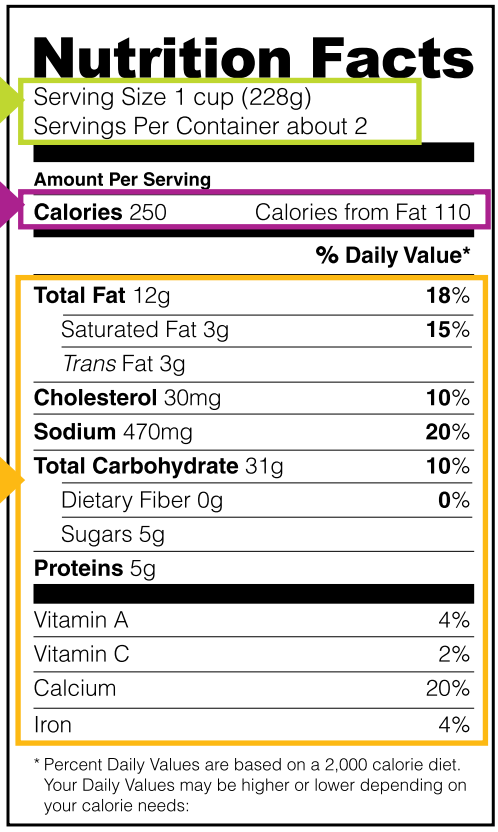
Understanding the Nutrition Facts Label

This page outlines the basic messages in the **Read the Label** program. By becoming familiar with this information, you will have the background you need to teach the program.

Check Serving Size 1

Consider the Calories 2

Choose Nutrients Wisely 3



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container about 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 12g	**18%**
Saturated Fat 3g	**15%**
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	**10%**
Sodium 470mg	**20%**
Total Carbohydrate 31g	**10%**
Dietary Fiber 0g	**0%**
Sugars 5g	
Proteins 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

Check Serving Size 1

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container about 2

The top of the Nutrition Facts Label shows the **serving size** and the **servings per container**. One package may contain **more than one serving**! Knowing the servings per container lets you discover the total number of calories and nutrients per package.

- The nutrition information about the food – like the calories, sodium, and fiber – is based upon **one serving**.
- Eating **two servings** of the food results in **double** the calories and **twice the amount** of nutrients, both good and bad. **Three servings** means **three times** the calories and nutrients – and so on.

Read the Label for… Serving Size!

Food packages often contain more than one serving. The only way to know for sure is to check the servings per container on the **Nutrition Facts Label**!

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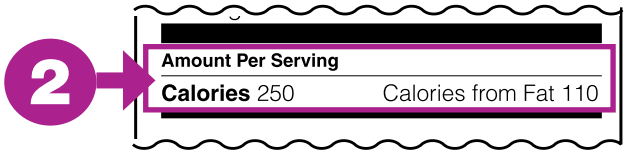
Consider the Calories



When looking at a food's calories, a good rule of thumb is that **100 is moderate and 400 is high**. Parents should challenge their kids to keep track of calories consumed throughout the day. It is important for kids to learn that if you eat/drink more calories than you burn, you gain weight.

Note: The food label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet — but an individual's calorie needs can differ. Encourage participants to learn more about "target" calories and to get a customized Daily Food Plan at **www.choosemyplate.gov**.

Read the Label for… Calories!

How many calories are you *really* getting: 100? 200? 300? Here's how to know:

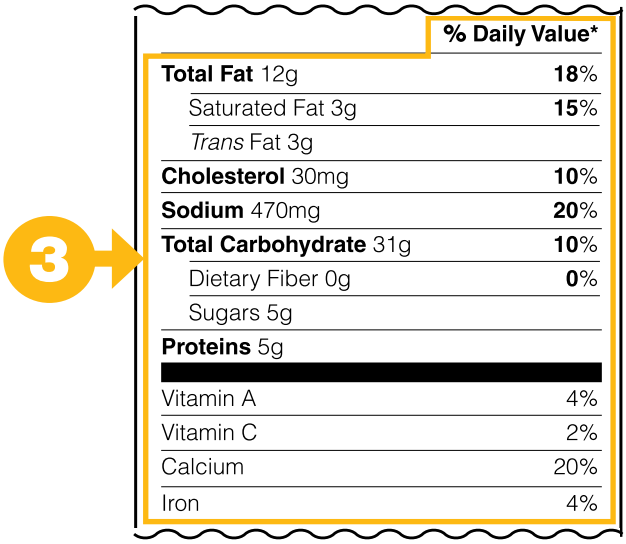
- First, use the Nutrition Facts Label to determine the number of servings you are actually eating of a food/snack.
- Then, multiply that number by "calories per serving."

That's how you'll know the total number of calories you're really eating!

Choose Nutrients Wisely

Understanding Percent Daily Value (%DV)

The term "daily value" is used to describe the amount of **certain nutrients** that most people need each day. The **Percent Daily Value (%DV)** shows how a food's nutrients fit into an overall daily diet. The general goal is to eat no more than a total of 100% of the recommended amount of each nutrient every day.



Nutrients To Get More Of:
Potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium. Encourage parents/kids to choose foods with a **higher %DV** of these important nutrients.

Nutrients To Get Less Of:
Sodium, *trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sugars. Remind parents/kids to choose foods that are **lower** in these nutrients.

Read the Label for… Nutrients!

- If a nutrient has **5% percent** of the Daily Value or less, it is **low** in that nutrient. This can be good or bad, depending on if it is a nutrient you want more of or less of.
- If it has **20% or more**, it is **high** in that nutrient. This can be good for nutrients like fiber (a nutrient to get more of)…but not so good for something like saturated fat (a nutrient to get less of).

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Conducting Community Outreach

Now that you're familiar with the basic messages of the **Read the Label** campaign, you're ready to invite parents (and kids) to learn about this important topic, too! Using the "Block" to make healthful food choices is something that every family can do, everyday.

To make this challenge interesting and engaging, the following pages offer suggestions for your presentation. This includes four hands-on, family-focused At-Home Activities that parents can take home and do with their kids.

Consider the Logistics

1 Choose Your Venue

Explore public meeting spaces that offer plenty of room and tables/chairs for participants. Consider:

- Community recreational centers
- Faith-based institutions
- Libraries
- Local YMCAs/YWCAs
- Schools
- Youth group facilities
- Supermarkets with meeting space

2 Solicit Participants

- Promote your Read the Label event to sign up 15 to 20 parent participants.
  - — Create flyers and posters to alert your audience
  - — Or, send printed or online invitations with an RSVP date
- Enlist volunteers, such as local nutritionists, to help facilitate an active discussion/give-and-take.
- Reserve optional equipment, if desired. For example:
  - — Computers/computer projection equipment to show the Read the Label web page for kids and parents (See *Technology Tips* on next page)
  - — An overhead projector and transparencies to show program materials.

3 Brief Yourself

- Review this Manual to familiarize yourself with Read the Label and be prepared to answer questions about the campaign materials in particular or the Nutrition Facts Label in general. (Also see *Check Out Read the Label Resources*, next page.)
- For more on the Nutrition Facts Label, visit **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation**

4 Shop for Supplies

- Shop for snacks and paper goods (see *Materials Needed* on page 8).
  - — When choosing snacks, look for those that have "unexpected" serving sizes – for example, a small bag of chips that has 2 or more servings per container.

Plan Your Presentation

If possible, a **two-part presentation** is recommended. This allows parents to take the activities home, do them with their children, and regroup to share learnings with each other.

However, if available time and/or facilities are limited, you could also conduct a very effective training in just one session.

Option 1: Two-Day Agenda

Day 1: 30 – 45 minutes

- Icebreaker Activity
- About the **Nutrition Facts Label**
- Introduction of Family Activities

Day 2: 30 – 45 minutes

- Group share of learnings
- Sharing of resources for continuing to **Read the Label** at home

See pages 8-10 for full two-day plan.

Option 2: One-Day Agenda

If your circumstances only allow time for one presentation, Days 1 and 2 may be combined by removing the Recap/Group Share step. Here is a recommended approach:

- Icebreaker Activity
- About the **Nutrition Facts Label**
- Introduce and distribute **Family Activities** (pages 12-15)
- Distribute the *Read the Label Daily Actions* mini-poster, one for each participant to take home to their families, and optional *Parent Tips* and *Cool Tips for Kids* if you downloaded them from **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation**.
- Encourage participants to continue to Read the Label at home!

Thank the participants for their willingness and help in teaching their families about the importance of using the **Nutrition Facts Label** to make informed food choices.

Technology Tips

- If you have access to computer projection equipment, consider projecting the activities for the group.
  - — You can find this Manual with activities online at **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation. Choose the Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign, and then select** the **For Health Educators and Community Outreach** section.
- Or, if using an overhead projector, print the activities on transparencies.
- You might also wish to set up a computer station and display **Read the Label Campaign** materials, found at: **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation**.

Check Out Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign Resources

Learn more about the Nutrition Facts Label by checking out these program resources. These are great websites and handouts to share with families, too!

For Parents:
For online information and printable activities and fact sheets in English and Spanish, visit the Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign at **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation** and select **For Parents**.

For Community Educators:
Visit **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation**, choose Read the Label, then click on **For Health Educators and Community Outreach** to find:

- Downloadable Community Outreach Manual
- PowerPoint® Presentation with talking points
- Handout materials in English and Spanish for Kids and Parents
- Nutrition Label Education materials

Day 1:
Engage and Start to Read the Label

Activity

Time needed:
35 to 45 minutes

Icebreaker Activity

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Family Activity Handouts (pages 12-15), one for each parent or parent/child team
- Bags and boxes of popular snack food, placed on a front table – at least one per participant

  Examples: small-to-midsized bags of potato chips, pretzels, chocolate chip cookies, crackers, popcorn, nacho chips (Tip: When displaying the snacks on Day 1, turn the Nutrition Facts Label on each package away from the audience)
- Plates/bowls for dispensing the snacks – one per participant

Introduction:

Ask the participants, *"Who checked the serving size on a food item you've eaten today? How easy is it to know what a single serving is? Why does it matter?"*

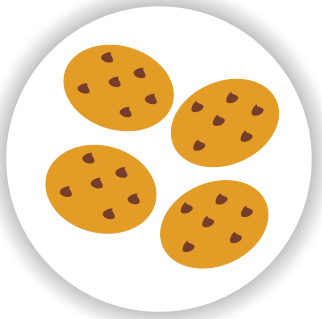
Now, tell the group that they'll be taking a closer look at serving size!

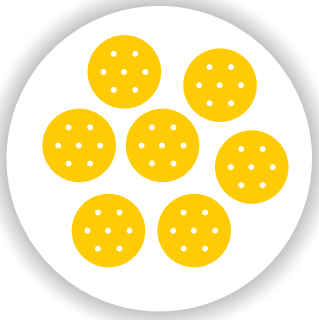
Read the Label… When Choosing Snacks

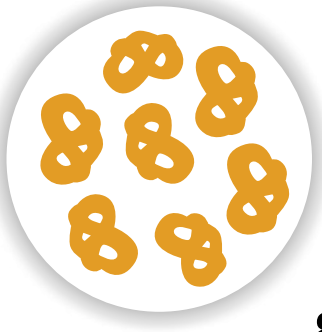
Tell the participants, *"Snacks are something we all enjoy, but it's pretty amazing the way those calories can add up. In fact, let's try an experiment…"*

1. Have each participant select a bag of cookies, crackers or pretzels from the table *without looking* at the **Nutrition Facts Label**.
2. Ask them measure out how much they would usually eat for a snack into a bowl or plate.
3. Next, have them check serving size on the Nutrition Facts Label and measure out an **actual serving** into another bowl.
4. Discuss how the two amounts differ.
5. Have participants count the total calories of what he or she portioned out before knowing what the serving size was.

Ask the group: *"Did you have any surprises here? What was the most surprising thing that you learned? Are you going to do anything different from now on?"*







Review

You'll likely find that the original portions the participants measured out are quite different from the actual serving size for the snack item. Assure the group that most people are surprised to see how much an actual serving of their favorite snack is. The key is to **check the label *before* portioning out a snack**!

- It's important to point out that all of the nutritional information – such as calories, %DV of total fat, sodium, etc. – are based upon **one serving** of that food.
- That's why it's critical to check serving size to see how many servings you are *really* eating. For example, if you eat **two servings** – you are getting double the calories, double the fat…double everything.

Reiterate to the group that when you don't know the serving size, it is very easy to take in more calories and fat than intended. Remind parents that the sooner they can impress this important fact upon their children/families, the sooner their kids will become aware of their own dietary intake.

Family Fun: Introducing the Activities

Tell the participants, *"In the snack food exploration we just did, you could see how the Nutrition Facts Label gives you need-to-know information about what's inside the package. You and your family can have fun getting to know 'what's on the Label'! To make it easy, we've put together* **Family Take-Home Activities** *for you and your kids to do together. Next time, we'll talk about your family's experiences in reading the label!"*

- Hand out the Family Take-home versions of the "Icebreaker" (**Read the Label When Choosing Snacks**) as well as the other **Read the Label activities:**
  - — **Read the Label When Packing Lunch**
  - — **Read the Label to "Shake Down" Sodium**
  - — **Read the Label At the Supermarket**

  Review each of the additional activities with the participants.
- Tell the group that these easy activities offer simple yet engaging ways that they can help their families Read the Label and eat healthier. Encourage parents to take time to do the activities at home with their kids. At the next meeting they can share their family experiences with each other.
- Ask them to make note of any comments or revelations their families discuss as they do the activities together at home.
- When they come back next time, the group will talk about things they learned, things their families learned, and their general experiences with doing the activities at home.

Remind families to bring the activity sheets back next time.

Day 2: Regroup and Share

Time needed:
35 to 45 minutes

Recap Activity

Materials Needed:

- Flip Chart/Easel and markers
- Copies of *Read the Label Daily Actions* Mini-Poster/Reproducible
- Optional: Copies of *Parent Tips* and *Cool Tips for Kids*, available for download in the Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign section at **fda.gov/nutritioneducation**

Introduction:

Welcome your group back – and tell them you hope they enjoyed their family **Read the Label** explorations!

Ask them: *"How did your family like the activities? What words come to mind when you think back on your family doing the activities?" As conversation starts to flow, write their words on the flip chart. For example, you might hear such words as: calories…serving size…fun…surprised…shocked.*

Read the Label… And Share the Results!

1. Divide participants into 4 groups, one for each Take-Home Activity. (Make sure that those in the groups actually completed that specific activity; if not, switch teams around as needed.)
2. Give each group 2 or 3 sheets of flip-chart paper.
3. Have groups discuss their experiences, learnings, and the feedback their families gave about the activities. What were their family's most important learnings? How can they keep that healthy eating momentum over time?

   For example, they might say: *They learned about how many calories they were eating; they learned their favorite bag of chips is really 3 ½ servings; they learned that the extra-salty pretzels they bought have X%DV of sodium!*
4. Ask them to write these learnings on the paper.
5. Invite one volunteer from each group to recap for the others.
6. Ask the entire group for ideas for taking what they learned and making it part of their daily lives. As a group, make a list of key points that could serve as a future Read the Label action plan; encourage participants to record these ideas and take them home to put into practice.

Closing

Thank the participants for their willingness and help in teaching their families about the importance of using the Nutrition Facts Label to make informed food choices.

Distribute copies of the *Read the Label Daily Actions* mini-poster on page 16, one for each participant to take home to their families, and optional *Parent Tips* and *Cool Tips for Kids* (if you downloaded them from **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation**).

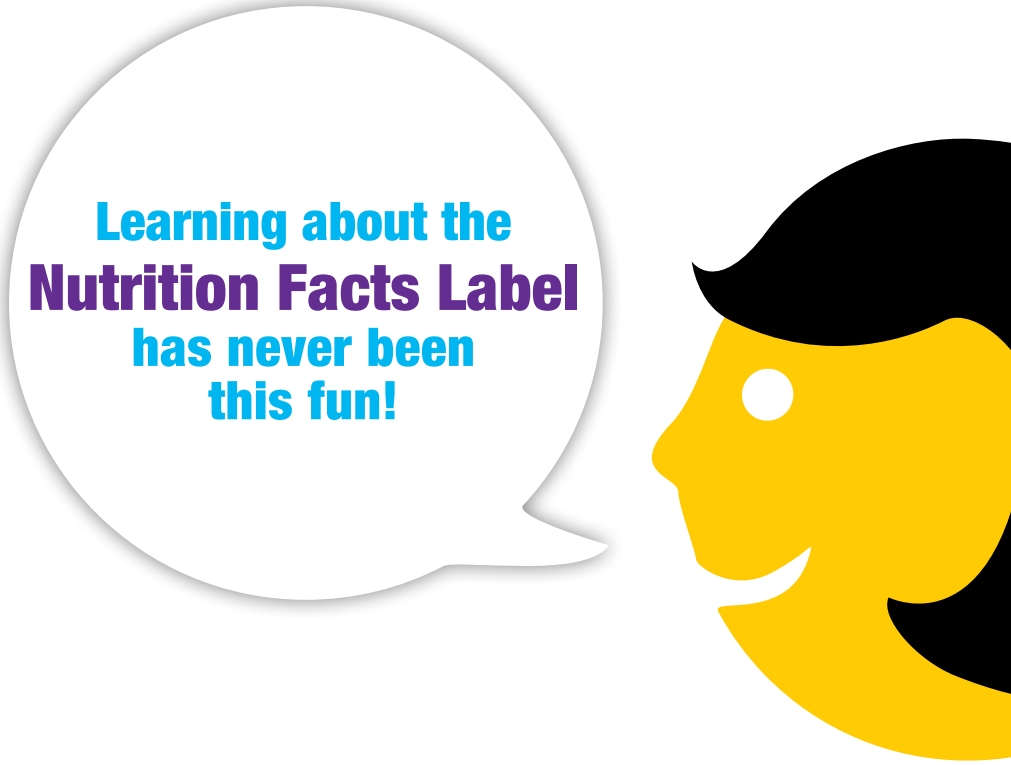
Remind parents that as tweens continue to Read the Label, they get better and better at comparing and choosing foods based on nutrition facts. For example…

- They can **check serving size** to see how many servings they are really getting
- They can **consider the calories** – number of servings x calories per serving
- They can **choose nutrients wisely**. Remind them to:
  - **Get more of these:** potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium
  - **Get less of these:** *Trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars

An Important Note About Nutrition Questions:

The **Read the Label Youth Outreach Campaign** is designed to help you promote the importance of reading the **Nutrition Facts Label**. You are not expected to offer nutritional advice, guidelines or recommendations. For specific nutrition and/or dietary or health-related questions, refer to:

www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation
www.choosemyplate.gov
www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines



Read the Label When Choosing Snacks

Family Handout

Any time is a good time to talk about nutrition and healthy eating. More and more kids are spending time alone after school – and you can help them to learn Read the Label so that they can make good choices when they are choosing their own snacks.

1. Ask your kid(s) to select a bag of **cereal, chips, cookies, crackers or pretzels**. Have them measure out how much they would usually eat for a snack into a bowl. (Make sure they don't peek at the label.)
2. Next, have themcheck the serving size on the Nutrition Facts Label and measure out a "serving" according to the Nutrition Facts Label into another bowl.
3. Together, **compare the two portions**. Discuss how the two amounts differ. Are they surprised to see what an actual serving size for this snack is?
4. Figure out the calories of what they typically eats for a snack. Remind them that if they are eating two servings, they will need to **double the calories** per serving to calculate how many calories they are actually eating.

Tasty Tips for Snacks

- Encourage portion control for snacking, and work with your children to measure out the servings for favorite snacks.

The snacks can then be portioned out into single servings according to the amount listed as a "serving size" on the nutrition label. Try using individual, snack-size plastic zipper bags.

- Some healthy, filling snack choices are:
  - — Baked chips
  - — Trail mixes with nuts
  - — Dried fruits
  - — Low-fat yogurt and low-fat cheeses
- When considering calories, keep this easy range in mind: 100 is moderate and 400 is high.

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?

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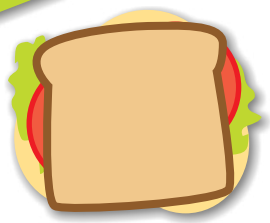
Read the Label When Packing Lunch

Family Handout

Lunchtime is a great time to Read the Label. Remind your children to look for the Nutrition Facts Label in the cafeteria line… and make it a family habit when packing lunches.



1. Challenge your children to create a 600 calorie lunch to take to school or enjoy at home! Siblings can see whose lunch choices add up to the best choices. Remind them to tally all sandwich ingredients, including condiments!

Ingredient/Item	Calories
Total	

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?

Tips for Building Tasty, Healthful Lunches

- For foods that come with more than **one serving** per package, have your children measure out one serving.
- Sandwiches can vary in shape and size – so don't limit lunches to traditional breads. Try whole grain tortillas, pitas, and even whole grain English muffins.
  - — Fiber is a **nutrient to get more of**, and can be found in lots of whole grain breads. Have your children **Read the Label** on different types of breads to see how many grams of fiber each contains.
- Spreads and dressing count in the overall calorie tally. **Read the Label** on the spreads and dressing that your family uses on sandwiches. You and your children may be in for a surprise!
  - — Try mustard or hummus instead of mayonnaise.
- Fill your sandwich with lots of "extras" – but make the extras count. Have kids try to pack lunches that include the nutrients to get more of – fiber, Vitamin A and C – and encourage your family to try some of these tasty add-ins to give a sandwich a whole new personality!
  - — Crunchy lettuce
  - — Thin slices of cucumbers
  - — Sliced tomato
  - — Chopped red pepper
- Nutrition bars and granola bars are easy and "packable" for a delicious snack, but don't forget to **Read the Label** on these lunchbox additions. Many of these bars are more like a cookie than a health bar. Choose one that is close to 100 calories and is low in nutrients to get less of, like sugars and saturated fat.

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Read the Label To "Shake Down" Sodium

Family Handout

Most Americans eat too much salt. Salt contains sodium and too much sodium can raise blood pressure — which can have serious health consequences if not treated.

But did you know that the salt shaker is *not* the main cause of too much sodium in the diet? In fact, over 75% of dietary sodium comes from eating packaged and restaurant foods!

Reducing sodium is a great goal for all family members. Remind your kids to Read the Label for sodium, especially when choosing snacks and prepared foods.

1. Challenge your children to find three of their favorite afterschool snacks in the cupboard. Have them compare the %DV of sodium on each one, and decide which would be the more healthful choice.

   TIP: 5%DV (120 mg) or less of sodium per serving is low, and 20%DV (480 mg) or more of sodium per serving is high.

	Rank (lowest to highest)	
Food Item	%DV of Sodium	mg of Sodium
1.		
2.		
3.		

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?

Snack-time Tips for Reducing Sodium Intake

- **Add Flavor Without Adding Sodium.** Try rosemary, oregano, basil, curry powder, cayenne pepper, ginger, fresh garlic or garlic powder, black or red pepper, vinegar or lemon juice, and no-salt seasoning blends.
- **Watch your veggies.** Buy fresh, frozen (without sauce), or low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- **Check the cheese.** Choose fat-free or low-fat cheeses in place of processed cheese products and spreads.
- **Go for fresh sandwich ingredients when you can.** Choose fresh or frozen (not processed) poultry, pork and lean meat rather than canned, smoked or processed meats (like luncheon meat, sausage and corned beef).
- **"Unsalt" your snacks.** Choose unsalted nuts and seeds, and snack products – such as chips and pretzels – that are marked "low sodium" or "no-salt-added." Or, have a carrot or celery stick instead!
- **Consider your condiments.** Choose lite or reduced sodium soy sauce and no-salt-added ketchup, oil and vinegar rather than bottled salad dressings, and use a small amount of seasoning from flavoring packets instead of the entire packet.
- **Speak up at restaurants.** Ask to see the nutrition information in restaurants and choose a lower-sodium option. Ask for your meal to be prepared without salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served "on the side," then use less of them. You can also reduce your portion size – less food means less sodium! For example, ask the server to put half of your meal in a take out container before it comes to your table ... or, split an entrée with a friend!

Remember: Read the Label to find the lower-sodium option when choosing snacks!

Nutrition Facts
Read the Label

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Read the Label At The Supermarket

Family Handout

One of the best ways to get kids interested in what's in their food is to let them participate in the decision-making process. Take them grocery shopping! It's a great chance for them to compare and contrast their favorite foods and "get their food facts first."

1. Take your child to the cereal aisle at your favorite supermarket.

2. Have him/her **Read the Label** to find a cereal that has low sugar and high fiber:

   a. Which cereal has the fewest grams of sugar?

      Name:

      Grams of Sugar:

   b. Which cereal has the highest amount of fiber?

   (Remember…5% DV is low and 20% DV is high).

      Name:

      %DV of Fiber:

3. When you return home, have him/her compare these products to the cereal(s) you currently have at home.

   a. Lowest Grams of Sugar in cereal at home:

   b. Highest %DV of Fiber in cereal at home:

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?

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Nutrition Facts
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Action Plan for KIDS

1. Check out the serving size.

One package may contain **more than one serving**! Knowing the servings per container lets you discover the total number of calories and nutrients per package.

2. Consider the calories.

When checking a food's calories, keep in mind that **40 is low** and **400 is high**.

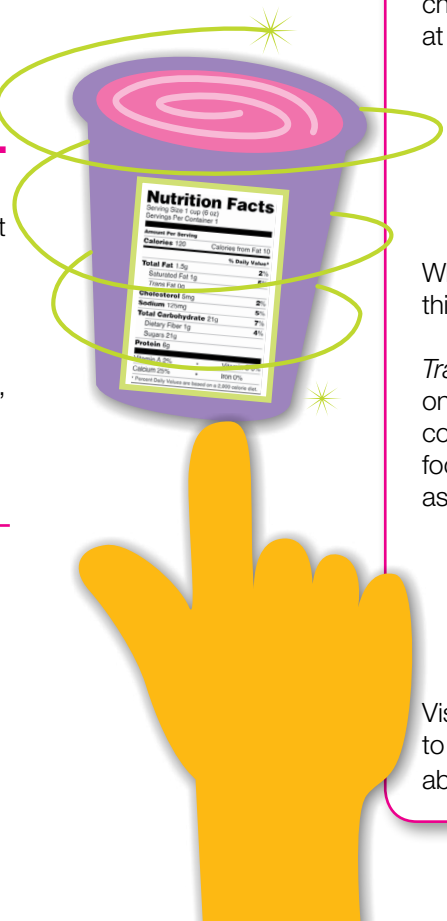
Challenge yourself to keep track of calories you eat and drink throughout the day!

3. Choose nutrients wisely.

Pick foods that are higher in "nutrients to get more of," and lower in "nutrients to get less of."

Get More: Potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium.

Get Less: sodium, *trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sugars.



The food label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet — but your calorie needs might be different. Get your own Daily Food Plan at **www.choosemyplate.gov**!

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A... is for Taking Action.

Show off your nutrition know-how! Teach your friends how to **Read the Label** when choosing snacks at home … at school … at the supermarket or at restaurants.

B... is for Being an Expert Label Reader!

When comparing %DV of nutrients, remember this tip: **5% DV is low; 20% DV is high!**

Trans fat and sugar don't have %DV listed on the label, so use grams per serving to compare the *trans* fat and sugar content in foods. Try to eat as little *trans* fat and sugar as possible!

C... is for Checking Out the Read the Label web page!

Visit **www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation** to get Cool Tips for Kids and to learn more about the Nutrition Facts Label!